

7 August 2013

My dear Fathers

I am happy to wish each one of you through this fraternal note of mine. I hope and pray that you are all in good health of mind and body, as you busy yourselves constantly in the many daily routine and creative activities associated with our mission in the diocese. May God's blessings descend on you in full measure, for your tireless activities in furthering the Kingdom of God throughout our diocese. In our mission, we encounter many fierce storms, as we sail the lake that is our diocese. We row the boat of our lives with Jesus at our side; apparently it would seem He is asleep in the boat, oblivious to our struggles to keep it moving forward in the right direction and the temptation to doubt His saving presence can be severe. The cry that comes from our lips at such times, **"Save us Lord, lest we perish!"** (Mt. 8: 25) should be one of total trust and confidence in Him, than a despondent cry of despair and lack of hope. He is assuring us constantly: **"Be still, and know that I am God."** (Ps. 46: 10)

ASSUMPTION AND INDEPENDENCE - FREEDOM

The month of August is specially precious to us for two reasons: during this month we celebrate our Independence Day, the annual commemoration of our *"tryst with destiny... when the world sleeps, India awakes to freedom and independence..."* and we celebrate the Assumption of our Blessed Mother to heaven body and soul, declared as a dogma of our faith by Pope Pius XII in 1950. In our Blessed Mother assumed into heaven our great country has its patroness, and our twin celebrations indeed interface very gracefully the two great realities we celebrate: our political freedom and the freedom from death signified by the dogma of the Assumption. We are therefore invited this month to focus our attention on the concept of freedom. Our reflections can be on the various nuances of this fundamental concept: freedom from, freedom for, the demands of freedom, its existential reality and actual relevance within the restraining contexts of the slavery or "un-freedom" within which millions of our brothers and sisters still find themselves living their daily lives, the slavery of hunger, the slavery of illiteracy, the slavery of economic dependence, the slavery of shattered dreams and unfulfilled ambitions in life, the slavery of demeaning living conditions and degrading human situations that make a mockery of our national claim to have woken to freedom and independence sixty six years ago.

28TH WORLD YOUTH DAY

"Faith is a flame that grows stronger, the more it is shared and passed on, so that everyone may know, love and confess Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and history" were the words of our Holy Father Pope Francis to over 3 million youth gathered for the 28th World Youth Day celebrations at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 22- 29 July 2013. This message was in keeping with the theme of WYD 2013 - "Go and Make Disciples of All" announced by Pope Benedict.

While giving a clarion call to the entire Catholic Church on her missionary mandate, the Pope continued: "Jesus did not say: "if you would like to, if you have time," but: "Go and make disciples of all nations"[Mt. 28:19]... this is a command that the Lord entrusts the whole Church, that includes you...but it's command not from a desire for domination or power but from the force of love..., He is with us always [Cf. Mt. 28:20]... the Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity, and the joy that is so characteristic of you... do not be afraid."

The World Youth Day Celebrations at Rio de Janeiro shall go down in the annals of the world history

as one of the largest gatherings of humanity that was intended to evangelize the world and to witness to the cross of Christ who redeemed the world.

LUMEN FIDEI: FIRST ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF POPE FRANCIS

Lumen Fidei – The Light of Faith (LF) is the first encyclical signed by Pope Francis. Divided into four chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion, the Pontiff takes up the fine work carried out by the Pope Emeritus, who had already almost completed the encyclical on faith.

Speaking to the pilgrims in Rome just days after the release of the encyclical, Pope Francis said: “For the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI had started this Encyclical, which follows on from those on charity and hope. I picked up this project and I have finished it. I offer it with joy to the whole People of God: in fact, especially today, we need to go to the essentials of the Christian faith, to deepen it, and to measure current issues by it. But I think that this encyclical, at least in some parts, can also be useful to those who are searching for God and for the meaning of life. I put it in the hands of Mary, the perfect icon of faith, that it may bring in the fruits that the Lord wants.”

In fact, at the end of LF, the Pope invites us to look to Mary, “perfect icon” of faith who, as the Mother of Jesus, conceived “faith and joy”. The Pope elevates his prayer to Mary that she might assist us in our journey of faith.

I exhort every one of you to read this encyclical and enrich your faith and in turn enrich the faith of our faithful. It can be available at www.vatican.va

ST JOHN MARIA VIANNEY DAY

The Feast of St John Maria Vianney was celebrated on 3 August in the Diocese. Almost all the Fathers from the Diocese came together at St Mary’s Minor Seminary, Mukootukal for the celebrations. The highlights of the day included benediction service, a session on Home Mission animated by Rev. Fr **Boban Churavediyil** and a Basketball match played between the seminarians and the Fathers. After the festive lunch, the young seminarians put up a cultural programme. I wish to thank Rev. Fr Tom Kunnumparam, Rector of the Seminary, all the staff and students of the Minor Seminary for hosting this event and making the day very enriching. Special thanks to you dear Fathers for sparing you time to be present for this event.

FEAST OF ST ALPHONSA

The celebration of the Feast of St Alphonsa in the Diocese began with novena, triduum and *Nadaipayanam*. All the celebrations at the St Alphonsa Shrine too went off well. I am grateful to you dear Fathers for making it a spiritual event in the Diocese. You were able to bring a large number of faithful from your parishes especially on the last day and efficiently organized the pilgrimage on foot (*Nadaipayanam*) for our youth. I also thank you for lending a helping hand in all the spiritual and liturgical services in the Shrine. Your presence was well appreciated by everyone. In a special way, I thank Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparambil and the Christian community of St Alphonsa Shrine, Nagercoil for your hard work.

SEMINAR ON LITURGICAL YEAR

Syro-Malabar Liturgical and Research Centre (LRC), Kakanad organized a Seminar on Liturgical year on 23 - 25 July 2013. Along with Rev. Frs Robin Kurumullil and Jomon Mangalamadam, I attended the Seminar. Many scholars from the Syro-Malabar Church presented Paperson various themes related to the Eastern Liturgy. We also had serious discussions and deliberations on these themes. I was happy to have taken part in the Seminar. I gained much knowledge about the Syro-Malabar Liturgy. Thanks to the LRC organizersfor their kind invitation.

INFORMATION

- Kindly take note of the Forane-wise election of Pastoral Council members on the given dates at 3.00 pm. Please send/elect only worthy candidates who will be able to attend all the meetings and contribute to the growth and development of the Diocese.
- I have appointed Committees for the following forthcoming programmes in the Diocese. Kindly cooperate with them.
 - Inter-diocesan (Changanacherry, Kanjirapally, Pala and Thuckalay) Meet on 14 October at Sangamam
 - Fathers' Annual Retreat from 21 - 25 October 2013
 - Diocesan Day Celebration cum Conclusion of Year of Faith on 9November 2013
 - Diocesan Bible Convention 6 - 8 December

HEALTH BULLETIN

- Rev. Fr Thomas Thekkeyil has gone to Hyderabad for specialized treatment. The doctors advised him to remove the left eye so as to prevent the spread of cancer to other parts of the body. He has undergone the operation today (7th August).
- Rev Fr Kurian Koipuram is at home for treatment
- Rev Fr Sajan has gone home for rest.
- Rev Fr John Thekkeyil is back to Sangamam
- Rev Fr Alex Puthettu is taking rest at home
- Rev Br Sumesh is recuperating from a kidney stone surgery in Kunnoth Seminary.

I ask you to remember all these Fathers and Brother, and pray for their good health. Kindly inform me or Rev Fr Muttathupadam regarding your health problems.

COMING PROGRAMMES IN THE DIOCESE

Kindly take note of the following programmes which will be organized in the Diocese in the coming days:

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| • 9 August 2013 | - | UCC – Convention at Scot Christian College, Nagercoil |
| • 9 August 2013 | - | Blessing of Plankari church |
| • 10 August 2013 | - | Susaipuram Forane Altar Boys' Meeting at Soosaipuram from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm |
| • 10 August 2013 | - | Uraviam Leaders' Seminar at Padanthalumoodu from 9.30 am to 4.00 pm for Padanthalumoodu and Nithravilai Foranes |
| • 11 August 2013 | - | CML Organizers' Meeting of Padanthalumoodu Forane at Padanthalumoodu from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm |
| • 15 August 2013 | - | Blessing of Presbytery, Nithravilai |
| • 15 August 2013 | - | Commitment Day, Padanthalumoodu |
| • 24 August 2013 | - | Junior Priests' Meeting from 9.30 am to 3.00 pm at Sangamam |
| • 25 August 2013 | - | CML Organizers' Meeting of Arukani Forane at Arukani from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm |

- 28 August 2013 - CML Executive Members' Meeting at Padanthalumoodu from 9.00am to 3.00 pm.

CONDOLENCES AND PRAYERS

Mr DevasiaPendanathu, aged 75, father of Sr Jaimy LSDP, passed away on 31 July 2013 at Kattapana. Sr Jaimy belongs to the community of Perumchilampu. We extend to her our condolences and offer our prayerful support to the bereaved family.

CONCLUSION

As we are going to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption on 15 August, an important feast of Our Lady. We firmly believe that when her earthly life was finished, Mary was taken up, body and soul, into heavenly glory, where the Lord exalted her as Queen of Heaven. It is the feast of Mary's total liberation from death and decay, the consequences of original sin. It is also the remembrance of the day when the Church gave official recognition to the centuries-old belief of Christians about the Assumption of their heavenly mother. On this feast day, let us thank the Lord for the gift of our heavenly Mother, and let us pray to Mary to help us find the right path every day.

Yours in Christ,

+ George Rajendran sdb
Bishop of Thuckalay